

Case for Founding

When a significant number of individual organizations believe that they can create added value by working together to achieve shared goals, they often form into a special kind of coalition known as a Business League (aka “Professional” or “Trade” Association). Such professional organizations are typically organized to promote one or more of the following shared goals:

1. Improve the caliber and impact of services delivered by the constituent members;
2. Improve opportunities for member funding and growth;
3. Create a vehicle for shared advocacy in public or private arenas;
4. Save costs through creation of economies of scale;
5. Promote shared standards of operational performance;
6. Expand public awareness and branding;
7. Create opportunities for shared learning and evaluation;
8. Create efficient organizational vehicles for shared action;
9. Effectively and efficiently mediate differences;
10. Create platforms for engagement of differing kinds of constituent members.

If such a coalition were formed by a group of music education and presenting organizations (hereafter referred to as the National Pre-College Pipeline Programs Network), examples of the goals outlined above might include:

1. Improve the caliber and impact of services delivered by the constituent members;
 - a. Shared libraries of curriculum and activities;
 - b. Shared training programs on cultural competency and strategic guidance on creating new diversity and inclusion initiatives;
2. Improve opportunities for member funding and growth;
 - a. Joint applications to large national funders (such as Mellon and Ford Foundations) that would not normally fund smaller entities;
 - b. Creation of a “start-up” fund which could help with the incubation costs of new initiatives;
 - c. Evaluating the local landscape for most logical and potentially fertile locations for new programs;
 - d. Evaluate requests by communities for strategic expertise relative to start-up and potential partnership opportunities;
3. Create a vehicle for shared advocacy in public or private arenas;
 - a. Shared advocacy for new policies (at the music camp and collegiate levels) that will foster musicians of color interests;
 - b. Create a unified voice advocating for new sources of philanthropic funding;
4. Save costs through creation of economies of scale;
 - a. Musicians participating in multiple initiatives across the country (for example, summer camps);
 - b. Organizations leveraging their human and financial resources reserved for

- similar activities;
- c. Joint purchasing of instruments, consulting and evaluation services;
- d. Shared use of common data software platforms;
- 5. Promote shared standards of operational performance;
 - a. Establishment of voluntary standards of operation that can be verified and lead to expanded funding and support (a so-called “certification process”);
 - b. Promulgation of “best practices” that lead to improved outcomes
- 6. Expand public awareness and branding;
 - a. Template website, brochure, and grant development;
 - b. Shared public awareness campaigns;
 - c. Shared publication of communication tools;
 - d. Social networking campaigns.
- 7. Create opportunities for shared learning and evaluation;
 - a. Shared elements for data collection and outcomes measurement;
 - b. Joint collaboration with major researchers interested in evaluation;
 - c. Libraries of references and data on program efficacy that can be used for local grant applications;
 - d. Support of professional conferences designed to promote organizational growth and learning;
- 8. Create efficient organizational vehicles for shared action;
 - a. Fostering development of specific national collaborations and shared advocacy across the field;
 - b. Development of local and regional learning structures for organizations and communities interested in improving diversity;
 - c. Creating links between programs across different phases of “The Bridge”
- 9. Effectively and efficiently mediate differences;
 - a. Creating an organized and effective way to bring together organizations of different origin, location, target communities, funding sources, size, activities, into shared action
- 10. Create platform for engagement of differing kinds of constituent members.
 - a. Creating an opportunity for shared engagement of youth music organizations, along with universities/conservatories, post-graduate training institutions, professional orchestras, current professional musicians who support diversity and inclusion, supporters of all of the above.

Basic Building Blocks of Associations

Professional associations are created by their core members. A group of likely core members comes together to propose a draft set of guiding principles which are then shared with a much larger group of potential members. Over time, these guiding principles evolve into organizational structures such as the charter, articles of incorporation, and bylaws and guiding principles will evolve into vision, mission, and value statements that allow the new association to be formed and positioned to acquire tax exempt status if not incubated in an existing organization.

Membership

In order to assure that an association is developed in the most powerful and democratic way, core membership should be defined in a manner that engages the largest number of members possible who possess enough shared characteristics to permit them to operate in a reasonably unified way. In other words, if the membership criteria are defined too narrowly, there will be too few members to accrue significant benefits through association; if the criteria are defined too loosely, the membership will not be able to come to consensus on priorities and actions.

Membership is typically defined as at least “core” and “auxiliary”. In other words, the association would have at its core, the organizations that are doing comparable work (i.e. mentoring and training musicians) and would be largely owned and governed by these organizations. The core organizations would grant membership rights to the “auxiliary” organizations in a manner that most facilitated their shared work, (for example, organizations might have shared rights to participate and vote on committees designing and implementing performance related activities, but might not have the right to vote on who could/or could not be the next president of the board; friends of the coalition might have the right to attend conferences and get mailings, but not have voting rights). In this manner, “classes” of members are typically defined and each class of members has a logical set of membership rights granted to them by the core.

Leadership

The association is owned by all its members and under the rules outlined in the bylaws, the membership typically elects a Board of Directors (or Steering Committee) that is at least majority-comprised of representative core member organizations. The association may decide to allow non-core members on the board as well and the number and nature of these additional board members are also specified by the by-laws. So, for example, it is not uncommon to allow the Executive Director of the association (the association’s paid administrative leader) to have a voting seat on the Board; it is not uncommon to have specific institutional partners named as having the right to appoint a representative to the board. However, at least majority control is maintained by core members.

Administration

Associations are usually developed by volunteers (most commonly core members) who then hire, as soon as possible, paid staff. One of the traditional roles of the board is to hire, supervise, and routinely evaluate an Executive Director, who then hires additional staff and operates the association in conformance with board wishes and approved budget.

Governance

The Board (or steering committee), usually working in committees, will then set about the on-going work of serving the membership by establishing strategic priorities such as those outlined at the beginning of this brief, overseeing and participating in the execution of these strategies, ensuring that the association is delivering the mission outlined in its

Articles of Incorporation, and that it is financially sound and meeting all financial requirements of the IRS and all funding bodies.

The board members themselves are usually elected by vote of the entire membership and board leaders are elected by the board or the membership, depending on the bylaws.

Initial Steps for Interested Parties

The following will outline a possible series we could take to begin development of the association. However, before discussing tactics, it is important to note a few principles that are usually helpful in such an endeavor.

Guiding Principles

First, the goal should be to create a “big tent”, meaning the type of core membership previously described that is as large and inclusive as possible, while being limited to agencies that can reasonably be assumed to have fairly aligned work and goals. Concerns about inclusion of organizations that do not share the same core work, or inclusion of individual/non-organizational members, can be readily addressed by broadening the “big tent” with further levels of membership designed for additional interested parties.

In order to develop the “big tent”, care should be taken to use development terms that are inclusive. Neutral terms standing as proxy for the name of the association, for example, are recommended during the development process so that issues regarding who is/is not within the tent can be prescribed by group process and not biased ahead of that process.¹

The development process itself should be open and inclusive. Individual organizations are not likely to join a membership organization perceived to have been developed by a cabal or small group of perceived “insiders”. In a membership organization, all members are owners and insiders and therefore must be included (as much as feasible) in all stages of the development process. Therefore, strategy for association development, planning meetings and their minutes, development documents- in short, all steps of the organization process, should be kept completely transparent and open to input.

There should be no preconceived notions or commitments by anyone in the planning process about any individual or organization’s future role in the association. Such notions or commitments completely negate the power of the association itself and engender distrust in its development. All parties must come to the development table willing to accept the final decisions of the membership regarding the future leadership and membership of the organization. Therefore, no agent in the development process should be surfaced as a putative board officer, board member, executive director, or membership organization; no partner organization may be promised any particular role in the future organization until the membership as a whole agrees.

¹ For example, some potential organizations might initially rule themselves out of participation if certain terms were used before the group as a whole could decide the membership it was seeking.

Possible Initial Development Steps

There are many completely legitimate paths to development of a coalition, however most organizations of this nature begin with a group of interested parties sharing similar core membership qualities coming together to share their interest in the potential formation of a coalition. This group, ideally, would represent some of the variability inherent in potential core members' business models, constituencies, ownership structures, geography. Usually this type of development group is fewer than twenty volunteers and its primary goal is to:

1. Bring about a future convening (physical, telephonic, or digital) of as many of the potential core members as possible;
 - a. Assure the convening is well-represented by diverse organizations;
 - b. Assure that the convening is openly advertised, transparent, and inclusive.
2. Develop for the convening, a "Point of Departure" document, outlining:
 - a. The desires of the group to create a coalition,
 - b. The reasons for the development of the coalition,
 - c. A proposed process for moving beyond the convening to actually develop such a coalition;
 - d. The basic principles of operation under which the successor steps will be conducted (e.g. nature of communications and oversight between future developers and the larger group).

During the convening, reactions are obtained to all the points above and approval is solicited to move ahead.² Convening members should indicate their future willingness to participate in/support the development of the Coalition. The larger group should decide any and all principle parties who will act on behalf of the larger group; it should not be presumed that the initial development group will become the second-stage "Coalition Development Group".

Then, after the convening, the newly endorsed "Coalition Development Group" should move on to develop guiding principle documents that would include definitions of proposed membership, auxiliary membership, board structure, key elements of governance, and organization management. All these guiding documents would be circulated to the larger membership for input and approval until they could be finalized as the By-laws.

Most of this development work is done on a voluntary basis by the "Coalition Development Group" and other volunteers. Sometimes the work is partially funded by small philanthropic contributions or contributions by future members.

Once founding documents are approved, members then officially join the Coalition, board elections are held and officers named as specified in the by-laws and all official

² Such convenings are typically facilitated by an able and objective party who can make sure that deliverables are assured and conversations are inclusive.

National Pre-College Pipeline Programs Network

Suggestions for Action - CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

Prepared by Stanford Thompson – September 2018

incorporation papers are filed. Among the early next steps for the new board is development of funding requests to obtain seed capital for staff.

Summary

Although these steps may seem extensive and onerous, it is important to remember that professional coalitions, leagues, networks, associations, are developed all the time. Almost all business sectors (both non-profit and for-profit) and recognized professions have gone through the process of developing them and the reason for this is because they create significant value for members. There are almost 73,000 associations in the US today (National Center for Charitable Statistics 2011) and there is no doubt that the opportunity for the youth musicians of color we serve (and hope to serve!) would be greatly enhanced by our increase of clout, funding, support, community awareness, outcomes, and impact.